

**Foreign Opinion Note**

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### EUROPEAN PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF INF

Current opinion poll data call into question some common beliefs framing the debate about INF issues.

BELIEF: Europeans are preoccupied with INF.

- o Salience: INF is the most important international concern for Europeans, but it has considerably lower salience than various domestic issues across all countries.

#### % Concerned (Approximate ranges)

-- Unemployment.....	65-75%
-- Crime/safety.....	30-40%
-- Inflation.....	30-40%
-- Social services....	10-20%
-- War threat.....	10-20%
-- INF deployment.....	10-20% (FRG & Netherlands = 20%)

Not surprising, INF has most salience among the better educated.

- o Attention: Only 10-20% in any country follow INF issues in the media "very closely."
- o Actions taken: Most people have "done nothing" to show their position on deployment: 70-80% in Italy, the U.K., and Belgium; 60%-range in the Netherlands and FRG.

Actions taken (10-20% range) include: persuade others, vote for appropriate candidates, sign petitions.

Only in the Netherlands does an appreciable proportion of people claim to take part in demonstrations: about 10 percent of the general public and 25 percent of the better educated.

BELIEF: Europeans are "paralyzed" by the fear of war.

- o Near-term: Most (70-80%) discount the likelihood of an actual Soviet attack in the near future. And pluralities (50%-level) are unconcerned about Soviet political intimidation.
- o Long-term: Most (60-80%) "can't really believe" that nuclear war could happen.

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BELIEF: The USSR has nuclear superiority in Europe.

- o INF Monopoly: Only 10-20% know that the USSR has a monopoly of "land-based medium-range nuclear missiles." So, there remains great confusion and ignorance (80-90%) of the missile imbalance. This has not changed much from past surveys.

There are various incorrect perceptions. Most commonly, two-thirds (65%) think that both the NATO countries of Western Europe and the Soviet Union have medium-range nuclear missiles "on their soil." Accordingly, INF deployment is probably seen by most as enhancing an existing capability.

- o British-French Missiles: When told about the British and French missiles, majorities (55%-level) know that the missiles are for national defense, except in the U.K., where people are divided (40%-level) about whether the missiles are for NATO's defense or national defense only.
- o Nuclear Strength: Only the British (50%) see the USSR "ahead" of the U.S. on "nuclear missile strength in Europe."

Elsewhere, Europeans are about as likely to see the U.S. and USSR as equal (35-40%) as to see the USSR ahead (35-40%). Few anywhere see the U.S. strongest (15%-level).

BELIEF: INF is in NATO's common interest.

- o Whose Interests: Europeans are only marginally more likely to see INF deployment as serving the mutual interests of the U.S. and Western Europe (35-45%) than to see INF mainly serving U.S. interests (30-35%).

Only a few think that INF deployment is mainly in the interests of Western Europe.

- o Deterrence: The British tend to see INF as a deterrent force (45%-to-20%).

Elsewhere, opinion is split in the FRG and Netherlands (30%-level) and in Italy and Belgium (40%-level) over whether INF "would help prevent" or would "increase the risk" of war.

This is no real change since last fall.

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BELIEF: Soviets have become the "party of peace."

- o Military Motives: Most people continue to see both the U.S. (60%-level) and the USSR (70-80%) as seeking military superiority over each other. This is no real change from earlier findings.
- o Peaceful Intentions: Europeans are somewhat more likely to say recent "policies and actions" of the USSR are contributing to the "risk of war" (40-60%) than to say the same of the U.S. (40-50%). However, the U.S. has generally fallen in perceptions of its peaceful intentions.
- o Sincerity: At the same time, the U.S. standing has generally improved everywhere in European perceptions of its sincerity in arms negotiations (45-60%).

U.S. sincerity is the prevailing perception in three countries, whereas the Italians remain divided (45%-level) and the Belgians tend to see the U.S. as not making a genuine effort in negotiations (55%-to-45%).

Although the U.S. does better than the Soviet Union in all countries, perceived Soviet sincerity has improved in the FRG, where people are now divided at the 35%-level. The USSR has dropped considerably in the Netherlands, where people also are divided now at the 35%-level.

Majorities (65%-level) in the other countries see the USSR as insincere in negotiations.

- o U.S. Arms Proposals: Uncertainty governs public knowledge of the various arms proposals. However, when U.S. sponsorship is identified, majorities everywhere (55%-75%) "favor" President Reagan's recent proposal that both sides station "roughly the same number" of missiles in Europe.

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